

Exploring World Music: Pin-Drop Activity (Version 2)

This version of the Pin-Drop Activity improves the first version in several respects:

- *Instructors provide the pin-drop locations in advance, allowing them to study the social, cultural, religious, and historical background of the locations before the activity begins.*
- *The activity unfolds over two days, allowing the instructor time to listen to and study the musical examples chosen by the students.*
- *The students are prompted to consider the cultural background and to reflect on their use of language as they share the music they discover with the class.*
- *Optionally, instructors might prepare for this assignment by asking students at the beginning of the semester to say a few words about their personal/family and musical heritage. Using this information, instructors could place pins in locations about which students in the class have some familiarity. If they were willing, these students could share about their experience or background with music from a particular location.*

Overview:

In this assignment, students will listen carefully to and report on music from a location and culture with which they are not familiar. Students will learn about the socio-cultural context of the performances and use this background to interpret what they hear using ideas and concepts informed by the context.

Instructions:

NB: Steps 1–5 should be completed before the end of the first class. Aim to complete steps 6–7 in the second class; whatever is left incomplete must be completed as homework, before the third weekly meeting, when presentations will occur (see below).

1. Divide into groups of 3–4 students as instructed.
2. Consider the pin-drop locations around the globe provided by the instructor and identify several locations about which the members of your group have no familiarity. Decide together on a single location that your group would like to “visit” musically.
3. Use Google Maps to identify the nearest cultural or metropolitan center approximate to the pin location on the map. Report the city on [this sign-up sheet](#). Only one location per group is allowed, and locations are available on a first-come, first serve basis.
4. Identify 2–3 compositions or performances that represent local composers, performers, instruments, musical practices, or styles/genres. Find example recordings online (video or audio are both acceptable) and post the URLs to the sign-up sheet.
5. Using online resources, research the socio-cultural, religious, historical, or other relevant contexts of the musical examples you chose using online resources.
6. During the remainder of class, listen carefully to the examples, noting salient and identifying characteristics, and discuss what you hear with your group. As a group, discuss and answer the discussion questions provided below. Consider how you might use descriptive language to report and interpret these features.

7. Choose a short excerpt (20–30s) of one recording to transcribe. Please listen carefully and feel free to slow down the speed and repeat listenings. Create your own transcription. You are not obliged to use staff notation, and the transcription is not intended to be read by a performer. Please be as creative as possible: you can use diagrams, drawings, or simple descriptions in your own words (without technical musical terms). You can also use different colors or objects to express what you have been listening to.

At our third meeting this week, each group will share the music they discovered and the features they identified. Present and explain your group's transcription, and discuss what you have learned through the process.

Discussion Questions

1. How many layers are there in the texture?
2. How would you describe the sonic qualities of each layer?
3. What is the medium (i.e., the objects used to create sounds)?
4. Are there any regulative components pertaining to time?
5. Are there any representative tunes that you can sing along?
6. What kinds of sonic patterns do you find in this piece?
7. How do you feel when you listen to this music?